

# Doggerel

by [Peter Dreyer](#) (February 2025)



Doggerel (Karl Wirsum, 1966)

*Then, in a free and lofty strain,  
Our broken Tunes we thus repair;*

*And we answer them again,  
Running division on the panting Air:  
To celebrate this feast of sense,  
As free from scandal as offense.*

–Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*, act 4, scene 5

“Doggerel” in French is *vers de mirliton*,  
In Spanish, it’s *copia de ciego*.  
In German, *Knittelvers*–  
An *Arzneimittel* [drug] one fears!  
Yet worse, in Dutch, it’s *kreupelrijm*,  
Which plainly gives away the game!  
It’s *poesia burlesca*, though, in Portuguese,  
A language ever sure to please!  
In Russian, it’s нескладный  
In Mandarin, 不押韵  
In Japanese, 不韻  
If you can’t tell how the last three rhyme,  
I beg you not to waste our precious time,  
Your frontal lobes are quite unfit to scan–  
A tragic case of unpoetic man!  
And should you dare dub my own verses “doggerel,”  
I’ll bid you, vile poetaster, go to Hell!  
“Stand not upon the order of your going  
[so Macbeth commands], but go at once!”  
Unworthy, as great Virgil once said,  
“To teach your grandma to suck eggs,  
Much less critique artful prosody!”  
*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*<sup>†</sup>

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teaching\\_grandmother\\_to\\_suck\\_egg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teaching_grandmother_to_suck_egg)  
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See

[†] “Shame on them who think this wrong!” Motto of the Order of the Garter, the highest British chivalric order.  
[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honi\\_soit\\_qui\\_mal\\_y\\_pense](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honi_soit_qui_mal_y_pense)

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